

Waukegan, IL - Over the past five years, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk worked closely with Waukegan mayors, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Army Corps of Engineers and numerous other state, local and federal officials to ensure one of his top local priorities was achieved: the environmental cleanup and economic revitalization of Waukegan Harbor.

Joined today by Waukegan Mayor Richard Hyde and Colonel Gary Johnston of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the Waukegan Yacht Club, Congressman Kirk announced he secured \$2.6 million to help fund the environmental restoration of Waukegan Harbor.

“We all agree that no single project is more important to Waukegan’s economy than the environmental restoration of the harbor,” Kirk said. “Waukegan’s economy will benefit from a combination of commercial and recreational investment on her lakefront. With over 1,600 acres of lakefront property, Waukegan has an opportunity to follow the successful models embraced by Racine and Kenosha where new homeowners and tourists have flocked to environmentally redeveloped land. Waukegan’s economic revitalization will enjoy a tremendous boost with the cleanup of her harbor.”

The process to cleanup Waukegan Harbor has been ongoing. This spring, an aging water line will be replaced and lowered in the harbor using \$1.4 million Congressman Kirk secured from the Economic Development Administration last year. Replacement of the 75-year-old water line is critical to harbor cleanup operations and will also expand the city’s water capacity, increasing business expansion opportunities along the waterfront. In 2003, Kirk secured funding for a project to collect and test harbor samples that was conducted by the Army Corps and the EPA. Project results helped identify remaining contaminated sediment areas in the harbor and determined next steps and funding requirements.

Once the water line is lowered, Colonel Johnston explained the Army Corps of Engineers will use the \$2.6 million secured by Congressman Kirk to do preliminary dredging along inner and outer portions of the harbor. The Army Corps efforts will prepare for the environmental cleaning project planned by the EPA Legacy Act to remove Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) hotspots in the harbor.

The federal government listed Waukegan Harbor as one of the first “National Priority” sites under the Superfund Law of 1980. In 1981, the harbor was designated as a Great Lakes “Area

of Concern.” The removal of PCB contaminants will permit federal officials to remove Waukegan Harbor from the “Area of Concern” list and move it to the “Area of Recovery” list. Cleanup of the harbor is essential to attracting commercial and recreational investment, as well as increasing the area’s appeal to new homeowners and tourists.

A study conducted by the Northeast-Midwest Institute and the University of Illinois found that property values in Waukegan would increase an average of \$53,000 per home following the cleanup of Waukegan Harbor. The Institute concluded that harbor cleanup could add over \$800 million to Lake County property values.

“Lake Michigan and other Great Lakes have been under environmental assault for decades,” said Kirk. “I will continue to lead congressional efforts to clean up polluted harbors while advancing funding to stop invasive species, mercury pollution and the dumping of sewage water into the Great Lakes.”

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